

"And tell him we shall all be good friends again," continued Madame Napoleon, or, rather, Mademoiselle Dubois, as she must still continue to be known.

Well, I accepted the commission. I felt sorry for Monsieu Napoleon and the disappointed kings, and I thought that to forego my own chances of tasting the omelette Tartarin at the St. Charles was an act of distinct self-abnegation. The first evening I had to spare after my arrival in New York I went to the St. Charles and ordered an omelette Tartarin.

It was no more the omelette Tartarin of the Cafe Napoleon than the present omelette of the Cafe Napoleon was like the wonderful creations of yesteryear. I could not understand it.

"Is not Monsier Alphonse your chef?" I inquired of the headwaiter.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "Fine chef, too, he's supposed to be. He's got a gold medal from the late king of Belgium for his omelette Tartarin. Didn't you find it distinguished, sir?"

"No!" I shouted. "I've eaten bad omelettes in most countries of the world, but for sheer unsavoriness I've never tasted one as bad as the one I've had here tonight. Bring your chef to me at once."

The waiter looked as if he was going to burst into tears, but apparently he thought better of it, and, being impressed by my manner, he summoned the chef, who presently made his appearance. He was a stout, black-bearded brigand, with a furtive look in his eye that I hardly liked.

"What's this about my omelette?" he began truculently.

"Monsier Alphonse," I said, "you are a fake and a fraud. Either you are not the original Monsier Alphonse, or else you have lost your mind, or else your skill has deserted you, or else the Great American Hen has been smitten with the craze for turning out an inferior product. Come, out with your confession. What's the matter?"

"Sacre, monsier, do you asperse my omelette?" he began.

"Your omelette is as degenerate as yourself," I answered. "It may deceive the gay millionaires of the Great White Way, but it doesn't go down—I mean this literally—with one who has enjoyed the correct article at the Cafe Napoleon. Now, listen, Alphonse! Monsier Napoleon wants you to return. He is pining for you."

"Ah, mon Dieu, the scoundrel stole my sweetheart," said the chef. "Since then I have vowed never, never to cook the correct omelette Tartarin—"

"Alphonse," I answered, "you are a married man!"

"Monsieur!" he gasped. "How do you know?"

"By the furtive look in your eye," I answered. "By the come-home-early atmosphere that you are shedding around this former home of bright bachelordom. Come, Alphonse, out with it."

"Monsieur, I am married three months," he answered. "I adore, I worship—"

"Never mind that! How about Mademoiselle Dubois, now Madame Napoleon?"

"Monsier, a passing infatuation, truly. I never cared for her. It was merely that—"

"Then you will take your wife to Paris and restore the Cafe Napoleon to its former splendor," I told him. "Come! They will embrace you. They will double your salary. They will love you as the long-lost prodigal."

"Alas, monsier, it is impossible," he answered, sadly.

"Alphonse," I said, "there is some mystery about that omelette Tartarin—"

"Monsieur, I will confess," he blurted out. "It was not I who made it. It was Mademoiselle Dubois."

"What!" I exclaimed.

"Truly, monsieur. And I had to pretend to love her, that she should